

texts of the works represented and the broader corpus. As a pedagogical resource, this elegant reader is an excellent and much needed invitation to do just that.

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Be Good and Do Good: Thinking Through Moral Theology. By Bernard V. Brady. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2014. Pp. x + 197. \$30.

The Second Vatican Council decreed that moral theology should be “nourished more on the teaching of the Bible” and “should shed light on the loftiness of the calling” of Christians and their obligation to bear “fruit in charity for the life of the world” (*Optatam totius* no. 16). Brady’s new book is a valuable example of a post-Vatican II approach to moral theology.

Well-integrated biblical reflection characterizes the moral reflection that unfolds in each chapter. Yet, there is also strong engagement with church teaching—conciliar documents, papal encyclicals (including Pope Francis’s), and statements by the US bishops. Furthermore, B. has appealed to the thought of classical thinkers (Augustine and Thomas), many recent Catholic and non-Catholic moral theologians, and influential contemporary philosophers. Particularly noteworthy is the interaction with Martin Luther King Jr. and Maya Angelou.

B.’s approach is also unique. True to the subtitle, the book provides pathways into thinking about key themes, concepts, and issues in moral theology, an approach that simultaneously underscores the loftiness of the calling and grounds it in common experiences. As an introduction to moral theology, the work covers most of the content one would expect, leaving some of the more controversial issues open for reflection. For example, chapter 4 introduces the principle of double effect, but the debates around direct and indirect acts or proportionate reason are not covered. The reason for this is, presumably, to get the reader to “think it through.” Moreover, B. seamlessly defines key concepts, which is ideal in an introductory text.

One shortcoming is that the sources and discussions are very US-centric. Nevertheless, I highly recommend this book for undergraduate students anywhere, not only because of its comprehensive way of dealing with the academic field of moral theology, but also because of its constant invitation to the reader to reflect on what this means for his or her own moral identity.

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Human Dignity in Contemporary Ethics. By David G. Kirchhoffer. Amherst, NY: Teneo, 2013. Pp. xxii + 356. \$25.

In recent decades an increasingly widespread use of “dignity talk” that makes absolutist, ambiguous, and often conflicting claims about human dignity has been met with a

growing chorus of critics dismissing “human dignity” as a vacuous, useless term generally employed as a substitute for other notions. Kirchoffer’s book persuasively rescues “human dignity” from friends and foes alike by illustrating how a more complex and multidimensional model of this idea can serve as a meaningful ethical concept.

Attending closely to the criticisms of “dignity talk” that fails to adequately define or consistently employ the concept of human dignity, K. acknowledges that a hermeneutics of suspicion has uncovered genuine weaknesses in the contemporary ethical use of this concept. At the same time, he makes a strong case that contemporary critics who dismiss the use of human dignity rely too exclusively on a hermeneutics of suspicion and a narrow understanding of the role of ethics and the nature of both the human person and moral experience.

K. proposes a middle path between uncritical use and complete dismissal of “dignity talk” by offering an enriched multidimensional model of human dignity, identifying four distinct dimensions of dignity—existential, cognitive-affective, behavioral, and social—and distinguishing between the realized and potential dignity of persons. The differing components of this model show how human dignity encompasses more than just personal autonomy or sanctity of life, while the distinction between realized and potential human dignity explains how this concept can be seen as the ground and goal of our recognition of various human rights.

In this creative and articulate proposal, K. moves beyond both “dignity talk” planted in thin soil and its critics relying on thin notions of ethics, the human person, and moral experience. His multidimensional model of human dignity offers a thick, contextual, and unfolding grasp of human persons and the moral contexts in which they seek to protect and realize a shared dignity. The analysis allows “human dignity” to serve as both a descriptive and normative ethical concept that avoids moralism and relativism.

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Vocation to Virtue: Christian Marriage as a Consecrated Life. By Kent J. Lasnoski. Washington: Catholic University of America, 2014. Pp. xiv + 247. \$65.

With this book Lasnoski makes a distinctive contribution to the field of family ethics. He argues that both marriage and consecrated religious life are “domestic practices of being consecrated and conformed to Christ” that should be animated by the evangelical virtues of poverty, chastity, and obedience (34). He joins contemporary theologians who think about marriage as a practice (e.g., Judith M. Bennett, David Matzko McCarthy, Florence Caffrey Bourg), but questions the widely accepted narrative of a church that has only gradually come to appreciate the spiritual potential of marriage. By his account, Augustine’s theology of marriage (often viewed as limited because of his emphasis on procreation, negative view of sexual desire, and affirmation of gender hierarchy) appropriately situates marriage in relation to consecrated life. Similarly,